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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
Region One
220 South 16th Street
Philadelphia 2, Pa.

FARMING WITH A LEAD PENCIL
(Model Script)

Reserve

ANNOUNCER -- You hear a lot about new kinds of farming now days but _____
County Farm Security Supervisor for this area has me stumped. He
said he wanted to talk about "Farming with a Lead Pencil," when I
asked him what he had to say for himself today. The best way to
find out whether this is a gag or not, is to ask him. What are the
prospects for the lead pencil crop this year, _____?

SUP.--- Believe it or not, _____, I was never more serious. I can
assure you that lead pencil farming is no gag. Some of the best
farming in this county is actually done with a lead pencil. Of
course, you know they don't really grow lead pencils on farms...
but the figuring done with a lead pencil on the back of the barn
door, has helped pay for a lot of farms,

ANN.--- If you mean just using a lead pencil to do the figuring, it seems
to me you're stretching things just a little to make a point.

SUP.--- First you're stumped. Now I'm stretching things to make a point.
All this goes right back to the lead pencil, and the use of a lead
pencil means good farming. I'm prepared to prove it.

ANN.--- I suppose February is the best time for pencil farming, and that's
why you're bringing up the subject today.

SUP.--- As a matter of fact, February is not only one of the best months
for farming with a pencil, it is also the most logical time for it.

ANN.--- If you're going to bring logic into this discussion, I'll have to
warn you it will take some convincing in view of the beginning we've
made.

SUP.--- A farmer usually convinces himself that farming with a pencil pays
off in real dividends. As you don't happen to be a farmer, perhaps
I had better do a little explaining.

ANN.--- That's what I'm really getting at. Explain yourself

SUP.--- Well, it's this way. Farmers, and particularly FSA borrowers...
just like any other good business...usually take inventory in Janu-
ary and add up their farm records for the year. That gives a farmer
a good look at his farm operations for 1945. And right about now,
he's getting to the point where he's doing some heavy work with a
lead pencil to lay out his plans for this year.

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ANN.---- You make farming sound complicated.

SUP.---- It is complicated. It's just like three or four businesses rolled into one and then you have to worry about the weather to boot. You have to decide when is the best time to plant your crops and when is the best time to sell. You have to worry about whether there are already too many hogs and chickens or whether you're safe on increasing your livestock and poultry enterprises.

ANN.---- Maybe you are right. A pencil might come in pretty handy in keeping things straight.

SUP.---- Just to set things straight for you, let me take you out to a farm to see what goes on about this time of the year. If you see the lights are on later than usual, you'll probably find a farmer with a lot of record books scattered around the kitchen table doing some pencil farming. Farm Security borrowers usually make it a habit to have their farm accounts and record books for 1945 pretty well wound up in January. That gives them a starting point for laying out their farm and home plans for this year.

ANN.---- You mean they'll have something to go by if they can take a good look at their 1945 operations on paper.

SUP.---- Exactly. And one of the first things they find out from their records is whether they made any money last year. Even though they had gross cash receipts of \$4,000 to \$5,000, they might find when they added up their operating costs, the new tractor and the family living expenses there wasn't much profit left. In fact the returns left for the farmer's labor may show he was paying himself about 10 cents an hour.

ANN.---- You can't make money that way in these days of high living costs.

SUP.---- That's where you start to work with the lead pencil. One of FSA's goals is to help a farmer operate at a profit. If his farming isn't profitable, farming certainly hasn't any advantages for him. He won't be able to provide a good living for his family. The first places he uses his pencil is to go after the leaks. And that's not one of the easiest jobs in farm planning.

ANN.---- If a farmer's income has as many leaks as mine, I can see what you mean. The problem is where to start.

SUP.---- Let's go back to this FSA borrower who is wrestling with his record books. Maybe his wife is helping him. He's a dairy farmer. He's milking 12 cows, has about 40 acres of fair pasture and raises most of the hay and some of the grain he feeds. He didn't do so good. The question is why? His profits for this year depend on the answer.

ANN.---- Maybe his cows weren't any good.

SUP.--- The records didn't exactly show that. After adding up the butterfat he'd sold for the year and dividing by the number of cows he'd been milking his herd averaged around 300 pounds. That's not bad. On the other hand if he had individual butterfat records, he might find he had several cows that average 400 pounds of butterfat and several that weren't paying their keep. Maybe that was one leak.

ANN.--- The only way to find out whether any cow is making money or not is to know her individual butterfat production, and what it costs to feed her.

SUP.--- That's right. And brings me to the next stop. Looking over the records he saw that he had bought six tons of hay at \$35 a ton when the pasture started drying up earlier than he had expected.

ANN.--- Six tons of hay at thirty-five dollars a ton...let's see....that's two hundred and ten dollars. That would just about pay for two cows or a new manure spreader. Of course that wouldn't be likely to happen every year.

SUP.--- A farmer can't do much about the weather, so you'd have to take into consideration that it could happen again this year. It's the old story of not counting the chickens until they are hatched, not to mention being raised.

ANN.--- Well, at least our dairyman is getting on the trail of another leak in the farm income.

SUP.--- Yes, he's still sweating it out. There's another thing that's been bothering him a little. His neighbor has been marketing whole milk. It seems the neighbor's monthly check from the creamery is always considerably larger even though both have about the same number of cows. A little work with a pencil shows that butterfat marketed on a whole milk basis means between forty and fifty dollars more a year for a 300 pound cow.

ANN.--- Let me try my multiplication again. We said he was milking twelve cows. Twelve times 50 would mean around six hundred dollars. As I get it, if he can qualify for the whole milk market, it will mean about six hundred dollars a year more money.

SUP.--- Let's say our FSA dairyman has just about finished plowing out the most important facts about his dairy operations and is ready for the next step in his pencil farming. Here is how the situation looks: He may have a couple low-producers he should get rid of. Then, if something can be done about the pasture and the hay situation, he'll be able to avoid buying expensive hay next summer. Finally, what will he have to do to put the barn in shape so he can sell whole milk and boost his income another six hundred dollars?

ANN.--- Now that he's got these things pretty well thought through where does he go from there?

SUP.--- Suppose we start on the weeding out of the low-producers in his herd. He might drop in at our office or the County Agent's office the next day to find out what arrangements he can make for regular butterfat tests on his herd. He may decide to use some kind of owner-sampler plan, working with the local creamery or he may prefer the more complete records he would get by joining the nearest Dairy Herd Improvement Association. Either plan would soon give him an accurate check on his herd. If he can eliminate one unprofitable cow, it will just about pay for the cost of the service. It would also give him a basis for feeding according to the individual production of each cow.

ANN.--- That sounds reasonable. He'll probably want to tackle the pasture problem next.

SUP.--- Here again, he can get lost of help from the County Agent, his neighbors or through our FSA office. There would be several ways of tackling the problem. Maybe the pasture could be reseeded with better grasses. Perhaps fertilizer will bring the pasture up to where it will carry the herd an extra month or so. The best solution would be to see if he would put water on his pasture either through a sprinkler system or ditch irrigation. This would enable him to carry about twice as many cows on half the land he now has in pasture. He could increase his herd or put more land in hay. And there wouldn't be any hay bill to pay next summer.

ANN.--- It's going to cost money to irrigate his pasture but it looks as though it would certainly pay over a period of years.

SUP.--- That's right and he'll have to take that into consideration in making his farm plans for this year. It will take money to put his place on a whole milk basis too. He'll just about have to build a milking parlor separate from the barn, although he can use his present cooling and sterilizing equipment.

ANN.--- But marketing whole milk would also increase his income almost immediately.

SUP.--- That's a good point. Let's see how this FSA borrower works out his dairy plans. First, he decides to arrange for testing his cows through the owner-sampler plan because it's more convenient until he has a larger herd. There's a good shed not far from the barn that can be remodeled into a milking parlor for about five hundred dollar's worth of concrete, labor, and equipment. However, he'd have to borrow the money to do it.

ANN. ---He could afford to borrow the money because selling whole milk would bring in about \$600 a year more than butterfat.

SUP.--- That's what he figured and planned to do. Irrigating his pasture however, wasn't quite that simple. He wasn't sure about the water rights and a sprinkler system would cost around fifteen hundred dollars. However, he decided if he carried out a good fertilization program on his present pasture, it would carry his cows well into the summer. He could check on his water right this year and if it worked out right, he would plan on getting a 10-year water facility loan next year to irrigate his pasture.

ANN.--- Maybe there is something to this farming with a lead pencil after all. It looks as though this dairyman is going to be in a lot better position to make money this year than he was last year.

SUP.--- Yes, he should be, if he can carry out these plans. That's the test of our farming with a pencil. Are the plans sound and practical? In this case I am sure they are, and his record books next January will show the result. Of course this example has just applied to his dairying enterprise. There is a lot of other pencil work that will apply to his other farm plans as well as the home plans.

ANN.--- It seems to me the same methods we have been discussing would apply to just about any farm operation. Get the facts from your records. Put your finger on the weak places and then make practical plans to make those operations more profitable.

SUP.--- Exactly. The outlook for cash crops such as potatoes, seed crops, cannery crops may see changes this year. The farmers can get up-to-date information on production and price trends from the Extension Service outlook meetings and publications. This will enable him to make such shifts in his cash crops as will best meet this year's situation.

ANN.--- You mentioned that home plans were important too. How do FSA homemakers fit into this farming with a lead pencil.

SUP.--- Most farm women are full partners with their husbands in this business of farming. And some of the best record keeping is done by the farm wife. Often the homemaker does just as good a job in helping plan the farm operations as she does on home planning end. Family living costs are usually a close second to operating expenses and may range for four or five hundred dollars to as much as a thousand dollars, particularly if some unexpected doctor bills enter the picture.

ANN.--- Then the homemaker is just as much concerned with keeping down the family living expenses as her husband is the farm operating costs.

1820. 10. 10. Ich er beschäftigt von Sonntag ab bis Mittwoch
Vormittag mit dem Bau eines kleinen, aus Holz, mit
einem auf dem Dach aufgestellten kleinen Turmchen an dem
Gebäude. Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.
Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.

1820. 10. 11. Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht,
und habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.

1820. 10. 12. Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht,
und habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.

1820. 10. 13. Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht,
und habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.

1820. 10. 14. Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht,
und habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.

1820. 10. 15. Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht,
und habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.

1820. 10. 16. Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht,
und habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.

1820. 10. 17. Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht,
und habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.

1820. 10. 18. Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht,
und habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.

1820. 10. 19. Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht,
und habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.

1820. 10. 20. Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht,
und habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.

1820. 10. 21. Ich habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht,
und habe die Arbeit mit großer Freude gemacht, und
heute Abend habe ich den kleinen Turm auf dem Dach aufgestellt.

SUP.--- Yes, and her plans usually center around producing as much of the family living on the farm as possible. That usually means a good garden, a farm poultry flock, several hogs or other meat animals, and a real live-at-home program. Other important things to be settled on the basis of the home plans is to see whether that extra room can be put on the house this year, if water can be piped to the kitchen or that remodeling job done. All this will have to be planned on the basis of the income that can be anticipated for this year, estimated farm operating costs and similar needs.

ANN.--- I can see that this farming with a lead pencil is not just a gag. It looks to me like you're saying that Farm Security borrowers put their farming on a business-like basis with good records and practical planning. There isn't any doubt those two things have a lot to do with profitable farming. These things are important too for the returning veterans who are going back on farms.

SUP.--- Problems facing the returning farm service man in the way of locating a good farm, getting adequate credit and deciding on farm enterprises, make it doubly important. That's why farmers cooperating with FSA are urged to keep record books and make practical farm and home plans. Our borrowers have proved that it pays.

ANN.--- Maybe I can apply a few of those principals to my high-cost-of-living problems. Thanks for your interesting report. You have just heard an interview with _____, Farm Security Supervisor for _____ and _____ counties.

Please tear off and return to INFORMATION
Model Script, "FARMING WITH A LEAD PENCIL"
IF-29-R (2-20-46) was used over

Station _____ in _____ on _____
by _____

Signed _____

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